



U.S. EMBASSY - BAGHDAD

## 2008 Provincial Reconstruction Team News

### -Iraqi Civil Servants Learn Computer Skills with PRT Help-

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**Diyala Province** - Provincial civil servants are gaining confidence and capacity to track and implement resources for development -- made possible with increasing oil revenues -- through computer training provided by the local Provincial Reconstruction Team (PRT).

In May employees of the Diyala Provincial Government received hands on computer literacy instruction in two U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID)-funded training sessions.



Civil servants in Diyala Province attend a USAID-funded basic Computer Literacy class arranged by the Diyala PRT and EPRT.

For most of the civil servants it was their first ever computer training experience. Many provincial government employees were so unfamiliar with computer technology that they were eager "just to touch the laptops," said Ed Carr Senior Governance Advisor of PRT Diyala.

Similar training sessions were halted in 2006 as Diyala Province became a center for insurgent activity. The increased violence and counter insurgency campaign made it too dangerous for both instructors and students to participate in training sessions.

During 2007, however, the military "Surge" permitted Coalition Forces to bring a measure of security and stability back to the Province. Early in 2008 PRT Diyala informed USAID that it was time to restart some training programs.

Working closely with USAID contractor North Carolina-based Research Triangle Institute (RTI), PRT Diyala and the embedded PRT (EPRT) operating in the Province devised a training schedule. On May 15 RTI sent a team of instructors to Baqubah for two weeks of basic computer training for employees of the Diyala Provincial Government.

The computer training is part of RTI's Local Governance Program (LGP) and is a much needed boost for the Provincial Government. Forty students attended the first round of daily classes which concluded on 20 May.

The classes focused on basic computer skills such as using Microsoft Office software and how to search the Internet. Senior members of the Provincial Government received individualized training sessions in the evenings.

According to PRT Member Brad Roberson the course was “getting rave reviews from everybody.” A second round of classes began on May 21 and is being equally well received.

The computer training is an important step in getting Diyala along the road to effective self governance. The lack of basic computer skills and technology has slowed capacity building efforts here.

Budget execution for example is a slow and tedious process and is carried out almost entirely using hand written documents. Providing training to improve the skills of government servants is the first step in creating a more efficient office environment that will speed up routine day-to-day tasks that have been computerized for years in the United States.

An additional step in bringing Diyala into the digital age is creating a computer infrastructure within the Provincial Government. Currently most offices do not have sufficient computers to perform their tasks, and those that do use stand alone machines with very limited access to the Internet.

The Provincial Government is aware of the need for additional computers and a proposal that will allocate funds to purchase computers is in fact working its way through the budgetary process.

This round of training is but the first in a series of training sessions that RTI has planned for the Province. PRT Diyala believes the success of the training will encourage the Provincial Government to commit to a plan of continued training for its employees as well as committing the necessary resources to install, maintain, and service their own IT infrastructure.